

Norfolk Record Office Information Leaflet 42

Parish Council Records

Introduction

Parish Councils and Parish Meetings were established under the Local Government Act of 1894. Since this date they have been the basic units of civil administration and representation in rural areas.

Parish Councils have a wide range of responsibilities, which include parish halls, playing fields, allotments, charities, street lighting and burial grounds. Their close involvement in local affairs means that their records can be very informative about many events and local issues, including coronation and jubilee celebrations, council housing, footpaths and rights of way, village greens and commons, planning applications and the Second World War. Some Parish Councils have also inherited older records, such as documents relating to parliamentary inclosure and poor relief. This means that Parish Council records are an important source of information about life in rural areas, particularly over the past century or so.

This leaflet lists the types of records which Parish Councils may hold and gives guidance on which documents should be permanently preserved. Please contact the Norfolk Record office if you would like any further advice.

Records generated by the Parish Council and Parish Meeting

1. Records to be retained permanently and preferably to be deposited in the Record Office.

Parish Council minute books.

Parish Meeting minute books.

Minute books of committees (such as Jubilee Celebrations, Coronation Celebrations, Charities, Invasion, Allotments, Planning, Playing Field, Burial Ground etc.).

Books of declarations on acceptance of office.

Orders establishing the Parish Council or Parish Meeting or authorizing mergers of parishes.

Title deeds and leases.

Agreements and contracts.

Investment documents.

Receipt and payment account books.

Annual financial statements.

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| Allotments | - registers. |
| | - plans. |
| Burial grounds | - burial registers. |
| | - purchased graves registers. |
| | - memorial registers. |
| | - plans. |
| Footpaths | - survey of footpaths in parish. |
| | - closure orders. |

- Commons - Commons Commissioner's decisions.
- War memorial - subscription lists.
- plans
- War - survey of accommodation available for evacuees.
- Air Raid Precaution papers.
- correspondence with R.D.C., County Council etc.

Insurance policies relating to Parish Council properties.

Photographs and programmes of events organised by the Parish Council.

Newsletters and other publications (e.g. parish guide, parish history) issued by the Parish Council.

Surveys of parish facilities.

2. Items to be retained indefinitely for legal reasons but not necessarily deposited in the Record Office.

Quotations and tenders.

- Burial grounds - registers of fees collected.
- applications for interment.
- applications for right to erect memorials.
- disposal certificates.
- copy certificates of grant of exclusive right of burial.

3. Items to be retained for at least 12 years.

Wages books.

4. Items to be retained for at least 6 years.

Bank statements, including deposit and savings accounts.

Receipt books of all kinds.

Paid invoices.

Paid cheques.

VAT records.

Petty cash, postage and telephone books.

Members' allowances registers.

- Halls, centres, recreation grounds - applications to hire.
- lettings diaries.
- copies of bills to hirers.
- record of tickets issued.

5. Items to be retained for at least 5 years.

Scales of fees and charges.

6. Items to be retained for at least the last completed audit year.

Bank paying-in books.

Cheque book stubs.
Timesheets.

7. Other records

Planning

For successful applications keep the application, plans and decision notice until the development has been completed.

For unsuccessful applications keep papers until the period within which an appeal can be made has expired (i.e. 6 months from date of planning decision). For controversial applications (whether successful or unsuccessful) the Parish Council may wish to retain the papers indefinitely.

Circulars etc. from other bodies

County Association, National Association of Local Councils etc.
Retain as long as useful and relevant.

Magazines and journals

Keep Local Council Review for at least 5 years, others as long as useful and relevant.

Correspondence

A difficult one! If related to audit matters keep for the appropriate period specified above. If related to planning matters keep for the same period as suggested for planning applications. For other correspondence please feel free to seek the advice of the Record Office.

The volume of paperwork generated by all local authorities (whether Parish Councils, District Councils or County Councils) increased dramatically in the 1960s and has continued to grow. All pre-1960 records are potential candidates for permanent preservation. The Record Office is happy to advise Parish Councils on the historical value of documents of any age.

Records inherited by the Parish Council

These should all be kept permanently and preferably should be deposited in the Norfolk Record Office. They include:

1. Parliamentary Inclosure

Inclosure Award and Map – often the root of title to land owned by the Parish Council (such as surveyor's allotments, poor's allotments, fuel allotments and the parish staithe).

Inclosure Act.

Statement of claims made to Inclosure Commissioners.

Minutes of proceedings of Commissioners.

Commissioners' accounts.

Commissioners' printed extracts from the inclosure award.

2. The Overseer of the Poor

Overseers' account books.

Poor rate books.

Parish valuations for rating purposes.

Inventories of furniture and fittings of the workhouse.

Removal orders.

Settlement certificates.

Settlement examinations.

J.P.'s certificates of appointment of overseer.

Appointments and contracts of assistant overseer, master of workhouse, surgeon to the parish poor etc.

3. The Surveyor of the Highways

Surveyors' account books.

Highway rate books.

Plans of parish gravel, sand and clay pits and public watering places.

4. Charities

Founder's will or foundation deed (but note that this often does not exist).

Account books and lists of recipients.

Papers relating to legal disputes.

Public notices (inviting applications, advertising auction of lettings etc.).

Charity Commission scheme.

5. Fire Brigade

Minute books of association for preservation of property from loss by fire.

Firemen's contracts.

Bills for purchase of fire engine.

Contracts with neighbouring fire brigades for fire cover.

6. Street Lighting

Lighting Commissioners' minute books.

Lamplighters' contracts.

Contracts with gas companies for supply.

7. Burial Grounds

Burial Board minute books.

Burial registers.

Bills for purchase of parish hearse.

(See also the list of records generated by the Parish Council).

8. Miscellaneous

Dikereeves' account books.
Adjoistment books.
Surveys and plans of the parish.



If you need this leaflet in large print, audio, Braille, alternative format or in a different language, please contact the County Archivist on 01603 222599 and we will do our best to help.

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